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Adam Fieled

THE SCHUYLKILL FLOWS

The Schuylkill flows cleanly, despite  
all the murk, as the Expressway looms  
on the other side of it; the trees, as  
usual, are Heaven, rooted much too  
deeply for us to fathom, cocked at  
a solid angle into a receptive Universe;  
I am waiting, writing on the edge of  
wars, chopping through the cesspool  
of centuries old shit, stunned into an  
awareness of the human brain’s torques;  
and when I imagine you it’s with a sense  
that we’re both standing at the river’s  
edge (we are, of course), and as long as  
we see the trees into the sky we blend in.

MAGICIAN

Half-anguished, I threw a red  
cloth over a table near your bed  
as you slept. I drew the tarot deck’s  
first trump: *The Magician*, & I,  
hopped up on pentacles, raised  
a finger, thumbed your pale chest:  
transgress, I said, & into your dream  
I melted, snake-waists tied. Only I  
couldn’t wake you from a visionary  
trance, in which you wept, fasted,  
prayed to be back in your girl-school  
knickers, knowing no sex, knowing  
only your body’s purity, disciple of  
*The High Priestess*, irrevocably high, off pumps.

PINE TO PINE

Pine Street runs in a curve,  
sloped towards all the bistros  
on 20<sup>th</sup> Street, clams open  
like palms. I can walk along  
the street and see something  
a little different each time, but  
what never changes is how I  
feel— elegant architecture tensed  
up against my heart heaved out  
on your floor so splintered, we  
tipped red wine, roseate, raw,  
you stood there topless for me

(pale breasts saying yes to some  
one I couldn't screw), it's Pine to pine.

## WHAT SOLIDITY THE YEARS DELIVER

What solidity the years deliver— against  
the grain of ephemeral travesties forced  
into our economies against our will— I  
think of you on those West Philadelphia  
nights we all got the right buzz going, in  
green coloration, so that space/time grew  
fluid and compositions magically coalesced,  
splayed out on the wooden floor of Mary's  
room, without our own consummation  
having happened yet, or needed to happen,  
and the composition of my thoughts remains  
fluid. The mystery in your brain remains  
what it was, circles under/over circles, I  
perceive light, shade, depth, earth-tones, bird-eyes.

## WALNUT STREET BRIDGE

As to why the world had to let you  
starve at the end (as I myself teetered  
towards possible starvation), machine  
mechanisms against those such as us  
always remain in motion, fanged, foraging.  
Everything Heaven-hinged here is blood-  
spattered; the last time I saw you alive,  
headed towards Center City near the  
Walnut Street Bridge, deep dark rings  
around your eyes spelled out a narrative  
of decay, death, deadened innocence. I  
knew your temper then, left you alone.  
That's when the Liberty Place Towers  
began to frighten me— what was high was cold.

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. His books include *Posit* (Dusie Press, 2007), *Beams* (Blazevox, 2007), *When You Bit...* (Otoliths, 2008), *Apparition Poems* (Blazevox, 2010), and *Cheltenham* (Blazevox, 2012). His latest chap is *Cheltenham Elegies/Keats' Oda Cycle* (Gyan Books, 2015).

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Adam Fieled

Voodoo

From my second-floor sublet on  
West Nittany Avenue, I'm sure you  
looked out at autumn State College with  
a mystical sense that your spell was being  
cast: hydrochloride pot, cigarettes,  
the rest that was you, splayed out in  
a posture that, somewhere, you had  
already mastered; the spell was against  
all the run-in-circles crew, "sororisluts,"  
footballers, frat-packs, the anti-human,  
anti-humane; what sutured our skin  
together ripped them to shreds, in  
your mind, as it was cast out (black  
mattress); using voodoo I missed, bewitched.

Harrisburg

I sat in a Greyhound bus-  
terminal in Harrisburg, &  
Stephanie Holt stood  
twenty paces to my left; had,  
suddenly, materialized there;  
skin glazed, forehead protruding,  
as though she had philosophical  
issues with reality... that night  
back in Cheltenham, I'd sat in  
a car outside her mansion,  
waiting for the deal to happen  
inside I barely knew was there—  
"looped in the loops of her hair"  
I was not; not a word in Harrisburg.

Cupboard

Jet brow shaded, furrowed hard,  
Julia went down on me so far  
as to become invisible, so far  
gone I lost her, stopping to block  
a shot I didn't realize I'd fired—  
she grew up a Cheltenham liar—  
they've got, I thought, Julia's double  
locked away in a cupboard somewhere  
in Glenside, in a house I used to  
run past when I ran cross-country  
in high school, burning a four hour  
high from a fifteen minute race. Now,  
the high was ten seconds, & completely

anonymous—the cupboard was her.

## Jen Green

As to where in human life there may  
be glamour; it hung in the Last Drop  
air for the Aughts—palpable, radiant,  
& also simple as being able to smoke  
joints in the adjacent alleyways. It  
was a party; the right individuals did  
treat it as such. Now, it's all white,  
the color of skinned bone. I try to  
imbibe, taste sulfur in the air;  
enchantment to damnation's stare.  
Jen Meese—the Drop's early Aughts  
resident sex kitten—disappeared in  
'05—did I find her picture here, under  
some paper towels in the bathroom?

## Recondite

It seemed not recondite at the time,  
on that much acid, in the dead of  
night, in an icy winter, with perhaps  
a foot of snow on the ground, to  
find one's self in a van in a parking  
lot in State College, with your friend's  
sister, as ska bands blurted out their  
numbers in the adjacent ballroom;  
it seemed natural. I drifted into her,  
pushed, pulled, someone cackled from  
outside the van, I woke still in the van  
with her in my arms before daybreak.  
On the trudge back, through snow & ice,  
to North Halls, I saw God through a grate.

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. His books include *Posit* (Dusie Press, 2007), *Opera Bufo* (Otoliths, 2007), *Beams* (Blazevox, 2007), *When You Bit...* (Otoliths, 2008), *Apparition Poems* (Blazevox, 2010), *Cheltenham* (Blazevox, 2012), and *Cheltenham Elegies/Keats Oda Cycle* (Gyan Books, 2015). A magna cum laude graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he also holds an MFA from New England College and an MA from Temple University.

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# OTOLITHS

A MAGAZINE OF MANY E-THINGS

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[Adam Fieled](#)

## Architecture and Levitation

The subliminal nature of architecture—  
demonstrating, for the human brain, what  
space is, how it might be saturated, without always  
obtruding upon our consciousness— as I  
drove around King of Prussia on those  
brooding semester breaks, a subtle sense of  
enchantment grew, hinged to what my  
future might hold, as one who writes. King  
of Prussia Mall, Tower Records, random  
commercial strips with record stores, restaurants,  
even the bus station where I was claimed  
at the inception of the break, were all planned &  
executed to manifest a sense of levitation,  
& left my brain somewhere in the world Other, forever—

## South Street

The girls Chris & I used to drive down  
to South Street— Erica, Nicole, Dominique—  
rights/privileges extended to us as Seniors—  
I see now that, as usual, the glitter/grime of  
South Street at night (Tower Records big red/  
yellow sign shone as a talisman, consecrating us)  
hid something darker, deeper, deadened  
against our polite passes. As to what  
world we might've woken to had we  
known the truth then— I remember  
bluster, braggadocio (who had who on back seats),  
I also remember the suave sense we had  
that these girls, callow as they were, were ours.  
We could've used a brain-scanner, or a noose.

## Russian Roulette

She should've been a redhead, I thought,  
as she drew the blinds, locked the red wine  
in the cabinet, drained her glass, & bounced  
into bed— not precisely the Don Juana of  
her postures, more like a vision of Pre-Raphaelite  
schizophrenia, as one reads in Victorian novels.  
Writing this, after ten years, it seems dulcet,  
peaceful, rather than a plunge into a life or death  
game of Russian Roulette, which is what it was  
for us. The book I'd just published sat on the  
living room sofa, as if there could be any other  
reason for all this, the wine, the bullets; what I  
put into her was another kind of book. The full  
dome effect, for her, caused a thousand suicides.

## Hit or Miss

As the world between her legs tightened around her, what she saw in bed with me was stark: okra, stamens, roots, all that in nature coalesces in erect growth; and a shadow father bent, then erect, then bent again, perverse from amassing wealth in a world whose submissiveness poisons him. Beneath the sultry, wooded surface, what I saw was a semi-frightened animal, along for an all-night ride (gruesomeness of 4 a.m. New Hampshire sun), knife thusly thrusting into the backs of everyone around her, managing to have stamina enough against constraint to take what she was taking. The mattress thumped: above, an angel was unable to conceal laughter, understanding it was all in the script, including the garish sun's leer.

## Birthday

She can't believe this: no one's taking her out. She specifically hinted to all these guys: hey, it's my birthday this weekend, why don't we do some thing? The thing is, the mirror beams back to her exquisite, dazzling perfection: silky red hair, bright green eyes, big tits, all wrapped in a smile that says everything these guys want to hear. So, she strips for herself. She's amazed at how well the parts fit together: the tiny bit of flab on her stomach (that guys love), the way her legs move, white of them next to black panties, how each time she purses her lips she gives herself an orgasm just from how sexy she is. But the thing wrong is just that no one calls anymore, all these guys don't call. Her body (of course, no duh) doesn't exist unless there's a guy looking at it. She has candy hearts left over from Valentines Day, takes a bunch to munch as she steps over to the window, hoping some guy notices her topless form hovering over Race Street.

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. His latest book is *The Posit Trilogy* (Argotist E-Books, 2017). Forthcoming this summer from Eratio Editions is *The White Album (2nd Edition)*. A second edition of *Equations* (Blue & Yellow Dog Press, 2011) also appeared this year.

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POSTED BY MARK YOUNG AT 8:25 PM 

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Adam Fieled

from *Opera Bufo*

#41

I have made a habit of courting buffoons. I have listened to a British waitress ask me, *would you like a scone or a buffoon?* I have eaten scones and buffoons together, with cheese and cherry preserves. I have felt that scones and buffoons are somehow related, especially where Tennyson is concerned. I have felt Tennyson to be both a scone and a buffoon. I am ready (finally) to eat a scone alone. I no longer need buffoons in my life. I have covered *Freebird* for the last time. I am ready to be free. I am ready to cherry.

#37

There is backwards masking mixed into the mix tape I sent you. Satan himself says he is himself but you need a turntable to hear it. The experience of hearing Satan's voice backwards may be absorptive for you. It was for me. I immediately fornicated with three high priestesses. I did a line of cocaine off a shag carpet, put on an Andy Gibb tee shirt, and wandered around looking for Snow Caps. I became possessed by a demon and I rose off the bed. I astral projected into the kitchen and my head was a Necco wafer.

#38

I was a cadaver in a copse until a cop arrested me. I was a convict in a jumpsuit until I jumped bail. I was a hitchhiker under galactic moon dust until I saw the sun. I was the sun as it rose and I shone on my dead self. I was a copse under the sun. I was a convict and a copse. I was all of this until I learned that you are what you see. I was what I saw until I saw that my eyes were shut. I opened my eyes to a kind of vacancy. I opened my arms to delinquency. I do not see anything now, and it rings.

#40

I was playing a lute in the Court of Ferdinand. I was being courtly. I was displaying all the *sprezzatura* that I could. I did not reckon that it was actually 2007. I remained strangely unaware that electricity had been discovered. I picked up a daffodil; it became a cell phone. I picked up a quill; it became a bottle of Nyquil. I realized that I was in the wrong century. I would have to live through hundreds of years to get to where I was. I would have to spontaneously regenerate. I saw my lute become a Stratocaster. I saw the court become the Bowery Ballroom. I only knew two scales, and I played them every which way. I heard deafening applause. I saw Ferdinand wearing Speedos.

#17

I don't know who my friends want. I could be a French-speaking gopher. I could grope every freckle on a red-head's behind. I could fickle myself in plaster or plastic. Of the many possibilities, I feel closest to mother's voices please-touching; concretes, red-brick wings, soaring up through Baudelaire's tendonitis. I ache with him.

**Adam Fieled's** *Opera Bufo* will be published by Otoliths later this year.

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Adam Fieled

*from* The Posit Trilogy

To Augustine, after reading his “Confessions”

If you really did find  
something or someone  
immutable, freed from  
torturous progress, I  
can't say I don't believe—

If you came to rest  
apart from the unworkable  
aligned profoundly with  
profundity's alignment,  
congrats from a still point—

If I seem cynical,  
catching your desperation  
as tides confounded you,  
I at least know your death,  
its heft, text, all plumbed

by me, or someone else.

The Point, Beyond

So much space inheres, so much  
withdraws from what space opens,  
light from blue-tinted suns & skies,  
so that leaks of seed may only be  
caught when one's back is squarely  
turned, towards more maintenance. As  
circuits express boundaries, what “I”  
inheres has a sense of endless reign,  
half-accepted, half-rebelled against, but  
mobile seeds & selves past horizon, gone.  
Crosses drop—barbed wire ambience,  
seeds of fathomless lows, brilliant clarities.

Tranny Dream

I find myself in bed with a woman  
with a man's crotch, & find this  
unacceptable, & so excuse myself  
into an autumn evening in North  
Philadelphia, looking for a train  
station, finding more nudie bars.  
I get trapped in an enclosed space  
with a stripper, done with her work  
for the night, who counsels me

against taking the train home, that  
I can sleep with her backstage at  
her bar. I push past, into the night  
again, & am assailed on all sides.

### **Midnight Saturday Night**

You said (it was a way of saying),  
pray you touch my parts in such a  
way that you don't damage them, but  
of course I can't touch your parts  
except to damage them when the times  
are so forbidding that to have parts  
not backed by gold is to have no parts  
at all, & it can't be crisp as it was,  
fresh as it was, ripe as it was, as  
your cauldron is full of grease, against

holding on to anything but allergies,  
& I am allergic to the idea of doing  
this if a new cauldron cannot be  
forged, & you're (& I'm) a fox walking  
on ice in a blasted landscape, & at  
midnight we crash into this together—

### **Dracula on Literature**

You can't tell me  
you don't feed on  
the mysterious disappearance

of the need to do this—  
that raw life & blood  
would suffice to

satisfy, & gird you  
against the grinding  
towards sphere-music

you fancy you make.  
I've lived a thousand  
years among human

souls, all in need of  
blood, little else, and  
words are no blood

at all— what suffices  
for such as you is  
(as you say) a

simulacrum of blood,  
with limited flow-  
potential, & as such

I counsel you (if  
you ask) to feed on  
something more wholesome—

don't scoff— wholesome  
is not relative  
for the human species,

&your words are dirt,  
feeding no one directly,  
&those who feed are

suspect, chilled by  
exposure to terminal  
frosts, unable to bite

what might suffice in the end...

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. His books and e-books include *Opera Bufo*, *When You Bit...*, *Apparition Poems*, *Mother Earth*, and *Disturb the Universe*. *The Posit Trilogy* and *The Great Recession* are forthcoming. He has work in Jacket, Tears in the Fence, fourW Anthology, Upstairs at Duroc, Blazevox, Great Works, The Argotist Online, Poetry Salzburg Review, the & Now Anthology and elsewhere.

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Adam Fieled

*from Equations*

#22

To dwell on that siren call: it isn't really transcendental. It's meant to lift you up, then plonk you back down again (wet or dry, as the case may be). It serves the siren, not you. Trish knows these rules very well, has studied them. Her approach to playing the role is methodical—you give them this much, and then draw back. Not everyone responds to Trish's particular wavelength because it presupposes not just intelligence but artistry. You must be a figure worthy of representation for her to take you seriously. Conversations must shoot up around colors, forms, images. The drunken nights I spend at her studio (white and red wine) are an epiphany. I've never had my mind and body turned on at the same time. Trish knows this; she is going down the checklist. Her postures and gestures are bold and dramatic; when she takes the pins out of her bun and lets her long hair fall down her back, part of me falls, too. It's winter; the studio (three of the four walls being mostly windows) is chilly. I've grown a slight moustache but, at twenty-five, still look boyish. Trish doesn't take my songs or poems seriously; they are unproven, not high enough. My thoughts crave her approval as my body aches for her submission. In this way, we dance. Trish is shrewd; she knows that, with my intense urgency, she must give in (at least once) almost instantly. She likes taking the superior position and her long torso contrasts neatly with Lisa's petite squatness. But (importantly) she hasn't fallen. She's played her part well; I've fallen alone.

#27

Yet quirks and idiosyncrasies facilitate fluidities—we all like what we like, just as we want what we want. For whatever reason, when I break up with Trish for the first time I fall in love with Sara, who I meet at the Last Drop. Sara is just graduating from the University of the Arts, with a journalism degree. She has a bull neck, big nose, and a massive bust, but for some reason it works for me. Sara likes to leave things up in the air; her equation with sex is oriented around speech. That is, Sara likes to talk about sex more than she likes to have it. She loves the intrigue of conversation, rather than flesh meeting flesh; the sparkle of a public tete a tete, rather than actual skin scintillations. I discover this over a period of months, as I am baffled by Sara's behaviors. She moves me compulsively; I always want more of her. The final equation she leaves me with is this: the wanting is sweeter (and sexier) than the having. But there's something I notice amiss in this: Sara's equations are frightened. They presuppose a minimum of experience, and a maximum of insecurity on every conceivable level. My failure to physically penetrate Sara devastates me as much as the collapse of my established relationship with Trish. With Sara begins a life spent in bars. I learn the right way to tip, to stare, to make successful moves over drinks; all those street level skills are a mountain to climb and a primer to master.

#28

New Years' Eve, 2004: I meet Patti at a bar off of South Street. We dance and play the usual touchy-feely games. Somehow the timing isn't right—either she's not interested or I'm too distracted. Months go by and I don't see her; then, I'm walking, alone, down Pine Street one spring midnight and Patti staggers into me. She's mushy and I can't make out what she's saying but we squish towards each other anyway. It's a nice squish and so we start sort of going out. Patti doesn't drink just sometimes like Sara does; Patti requires drinks. There is something bestial in her soul that only alcohol can conquer. But drinks make you say and do funny things that

aren't strictly natural (whereas getting stoned can make things more naturalized) so that Patti and I establish immediately the artificiality of our together equations. Patti likes to speak in tongues, talk gibberish, talk Russian—I humor her. But in our drunkenness I realize that Patti is avoiding completely consummating our relationship. We take walks down side streets in the wee hours and make out and grope against walls; roll in the grass beside the Walnut Street Bridge, my hand in her skirt; but the big caress never happens. Everything has to be drama, everything has to be public, and since we can't have sex in public we might as well not have it at all. Then, she starts to torture me with other barfly guys. This is life in the street; not within reaching distance of the godly, or the diabolical. You make your image what it is, then you are what your image is—that's the basic street equation.

### #31

I meet Heather in a bar; I have created a context in which bars are the only place to do social business. Everyone in the arts wants to get drunk; unfortunately, I learn that not everyone in the arts is actually an artist. For every soul that goes up over words, images, or sounds, there are ten souls that lust after praise, glamour, and intrigue. Now I have cohorts that help me do business in the arts. Our business is to recruit artists to perform in one of our shows. Because all of us happen to be males, the competition levels among us over females is intense (we're all more or less straight). When a new woman sits down with us (who may or may not prove to be one of our prize performers), it's off to the races. Heather sits down and Mick happens to be more on the ball than me. Everything he says hits the bull's eye; all his moves lock into Heather's. The exquisite anguish of living in bars; when someone else's moves work and yours don't. What's pitiable about all of us is that we live in these anguished edges; everything hinges on social contingencies. You watch someone else move in for the kill, and feel your own dryness. Later, this changes; Heather falls for my moves. What I learn is that in this jungle atmosphere, all positive contacts can be useful. Because I don't snap or cock block Mick, Heather becomes someone held in reserve. The problem with all of these levels is that they turn human beings into chess pieces. You can't go up, you can only move around on the board. Bars and street life harden people into rigid postures that are difficult to efface. If you fall in love with this hardness, you become a flush.

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. He has released four print books: *Opera Bufo* (Otoliths, 2007), *When You Bit...* (Otoliths, 2008), *Chimes* (Blazevox, 2009), and *Apparition Poems* (Blazevox, 2010) as well as numerous chapbooks, e-chaps, and e-books, including *Posit* (Dusie Press, 2007), *Beams* (Blazevox, 2007), and *The White Album* (ungovernable press, 2009). He has work in journals like *Tears in the Fence*, *Great Works*, *The Argotist*, *Upstairs at Duroc*, *Jacket*, on PennSound, in the *&Now Awards Anthology* from Lake Forest College Press, and an essay forthcoming in *Poetry Salzburg Review* from University of Salzburg Press. A magna cum laude graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he also holds an MFA from New England College and an MA from Temple University, where he is completing his PhD.

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Adam Fieled

*from* Apparition Poems

#89

o it's drab  
outside the trees

really only me  
I see there

#75

sun is there  
not here

anyway  
the bed's made

#150

last September cricket  
leaf falls on him

#85

not to be mistaken  
not to be messed with  
not to be forsaken  
only to be blessed with

how it must be on Jupiter

#80

I rev clean across  
I'm paved  
I'm rolling in moss  
I save

**Adam Fieled** is a poet, musician, and essayist currently living in Philly. He has released four albums, including two spoken word collections, *Raw Rainy Fog* (Radio Eris Records, 2002), and *Virtual Pinball/Madame Psychosis* (WSG Productions, 2006); runs two reading series, This Charming Lab and the Philly Free School; edits [PFS Post](#); has work in Jacket, Cordite, Nth Position, Word For/Word, Rain Taxi, Blazevox, The Argotist, Mipoesias, Eratio, and elsewhere.

Is currently a PhD candidate at Temple University.

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# OTOLITHS

A MAGAZINE OF MANY E-THINGS

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[Adam Fieled](#)

## Ode on Waves

Raw December chill: I stood, smoking, outside  
Starbucks, staring through the pane façade  
at a brunette teenager, fine-featured, who looked like  
me, bent over a history book; moody, pawed  
at by circumstances past her control. I thought of  
State College, my sublets, also a buried past,  
attempts at being a consummate artist, & at love.

The tapestry around my brain being woven  
showed a vignette, disappearing into exiled years,  
someone of my kith & kin, damned not to last—

acclaimed as useless. When I'd walk Conshy streets,  
I was always, without knowing it, looking for her.  
If it was Manayunk, I'd put on the old shirts, sleeves  
still unstained by years of heavy use, eyes stirred  
by possibility. Or Center City, shady ghost-like incisions  
of the old Aughts scenester crew, now vacant,  
derelict, all guesses at identity lost, open to revision—  
in another paned façade, summer's day, reflections  
of poison in the air, the iced coffee (even), the toilets,  
waves against all we'd held together here breaking—

&, as one who ages must know, why waves have to break.  
Natural human progression: everything covered up.  
Natural human predilection: to bolster everything fake;  
& yet if you can fight the masses, the rackets, with guts,  
you are inscribing the light of heaven into willing granite,  
from the haunted, furrowed brows of the doomed  
who deserved better, to the idle buzzers whose vanity  
filled the galleries, clubs, coffee shops, with human  
energy, a sense of hipness, rightness, in earlier times,  
so that your life still holds the unity of one heart, one room.

There's what you can make right, what you can't, lots of  
grey area around, sort of, maybe, "I'll find out later,"  
attempts at what you think, inebriated, enflamed, is love,  
what gets produced beyond your control, faked or fated.  
So I stood there, saw her through that pane, Whitemarsh  
Shopping Center moving heedlessly, cheaply, around us,  
& she was more real than a Grecian Urn, or Shelley's skylark,  
I could've run away, she might've, torn the frozen panic  
of what it meant, but didn't: & this, later, is what I can give her, lines,  
whatever else doesn't matter, this is the wave for the two of us.

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. His latest book, *Trish: A Romance*, was released by [Funtime Press](#) in 2019.

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# OTOLITHS

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[Adam Fieled](#)

## Wayfaring Angel

Visions of jungle, elephants doze;  
tigers are slumberous, spiders repose  
before any human can frighten their nose.

She's on a bender, peyote & grass;  
spirits defend her, karma amassed;  
astonishing yogis, the head of her class.

The temple was gold, ceiling a dome;  
lost in the hills, she found me alone;  
a wayfaring straggler, rough skin & bone.

Struggle like death, hours went on;  
run out of breath, night into dawn;  
entwined in a web, manifested, then gone.

She was still high, I watched her evoke  
Gods of the jungle, deities spoke  
exhorting this princess, before she awoke

to lead me to reason, why she was here;  
guide me past wonder, guide me past fear;  
bedraggle not ever what must be made clear.

How I was chosen, she tried to explain;  
clipped not by shyness, confusion, or pain;  
yet all I could see was her flesh in my brain—

sculpted & glossy, wax-white & smooth,  
I placed my hands on, couldn't remove  
while she gave the dharma, was trying to prove

that now she'd achieved the peak of her dream;

now what was woven wouldn't need seams;  
the Wayfaring Angel I'd been was her means.

## Katherine's Blues

Exquisite she looks, exquisite she is;  
saucer-eyed Goddess, stuck in a biz  
which hangs on a racket, the reason it is—

stuck in a basement, yellow-walled dread;  
doing them favors, as though it's a bed  
& what you can give is the weight of your head—

jigger the hard-drive, send out the code;  
get in the back-seat, get on the road  
attempt to imagine you're more than a toad—

clear it wide open, some space in your mind;  
line up the stooges, rob them all blind;  
remind the whole cosmos you haven't gone blind—

you've got an angle, against the brigade;  
loosing the tangles, re-blunting the blades;  
no panic at facing the price that you've paid—

hope springs eternal, when someone has heart;  
won't be abraded, deflated apart;  
she's learned the precision to aim the right darts—

worlds get re-routed, so lives can go on;  
nights let the moon in, so there can be dawn;  
I'm writing the moonlight which made queen the pawn—

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. His latest book, *The Great Recession*, was released as an Argotist Online e-book in 2019.

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# OTOLITHS

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[Adam Fieled](#)

## The Witches of South Philadelphia

I.

If you ask the Devil she worships if he is  
static or dynamic, a lightning bolt or a clod,  
you'd be stunned to find him turning his  
tools towards the erection of a greater God.

She's great with drinks, smokes, what's green.

Yet, as I was between engagements, how it was  
I fell asleep I don't know. Her hands seemed  
in the cake somehow, Carpenter Street laws  
imposing three twists of her wrists, words  
uttered backwards like a rogue monk might've  
in 1311, ops number one with an arrow.

Birds

shot off the sill, mild November night, kinds of  
confetti falling over me as the bloody corpse I was—

II.

"You don't question Mother Nature. What I have  
between my legs is among the stars, out into space.  
I carry Nature around and men can never really  
know what Nature is. What I'm picking out of  
the air now is who you are. So while we go through  
these things, don't question, OK? Just understand  
that what I'm doing is an expression of myself as  
a Goddess, and as the Goddess I am."

III.

Dagger's flick into, under my skin, droplets  
into the silver chalice, I could feel  
myself almost swoon, fade into darkness.

She was quizzically writing a seal  
onto parchment: here we stood, man & wife,  
not forgetting what it meant that this  
started in a classroom, for Christ's sake,  
us opening our books onto Blake,

& the other she-devil laughs, sits  
watching me too: two girls, two knives.

“Alright, cast the bloody circle, love, but  
as you’re off with your skirt please  
remember to be gentle with your bit of  
Nature, & don’t be hard on my knees.”  
It moved in on us, her personal Devil,  
lightning bolted our asses into greenness,  
festooned the room with forwards noise;  
she moved in on me, her Goddess-  
assistant, licked clean powdered toys,  
held onto me as magnet to metal.

5:30 am: I stepped out of the circle as she slept,  
onto the balcony, darkness on Carpenter  
conferring benediction, light as it crept  
hitting me inwards, black turning lavender.  
Taking up one of her notebooks, I  
ripped out a sheet of paper, composed  
a single stanza in terse couplets—  
who the Goddess was, what she was  
without a God, or with, in the drunkenness  
of marriage to a man, & why.

IV.

So, through the Devil’d God, the she-Devil  
Goddess prevailed into union with the poet.  
What he learned in the South Philly flat: levels  
of calm around good, evil, how to hold it.  
The breakfast feast was more than waffles;  
a green apple, cut open, exposed its raw life;  
just as the sunrise exposed what was lawful:  
she’d emerged, forwards, as my natural wife.

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. His latest book, *The Great Recession*, was released as an Argotist Online e-book in 2019.

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# OTOLITHS

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## [Adam Fieled](#)

### Perfect

The poster of Monroe, dousing herself in cologne, was you, yourself, again— had to be perfect, as you said; as Jennifer was you, yourself again, perfectly, as didn't need to be said, couldn't have been anyway, then. I imagine you, wandering down to that dank basement, with a sense of symmetry in your brain about what had been, would be. By the time it was time, your hair had darkened, but the core of you remained bright, as bright as it had been in the house on South Atherton Street. It was your turn to cut down the middle, offer up your vision of perfection to a man who appeared to you more than a curiosity— sharper.

The shock of making love amid a sea of paper, piles upon piles— my own vision of perfection had arrived, on the wings of the Symbolists, as they were me, myself, again, etc. The space we were able to inhabit that autumn, a from-here armistice season against Hell, couldn't last, but we didn't need it to. Rather, if we cut into each other at the right angles, a fossil shell imprint would be left on State College, & the whole world; pungent, starkly ravishing enough to last our own un-warped version of forever. So it has been for me. As to where & what you cut down the middle of, as we speak— we'll see if I'm pure enough to know anymore, Emily. Maybe.

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. His latest collection, *The Great Recession*, was released as an Argotist Online e-book in 2019.

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# OTOLITHS

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[Adam Fieled](#)

## Cabinet

The painter's brain seeks the transcendental  
in sensuality; once it's achieved, does the routine  
maintenance work of holding it, conserving it,  
memorizing it, filing it away in the special cabinet  
for what makes human life, in all of its squalor,  
worth living. It was taken for granted, when we  
were good, that we could give each other such a life.  
This marked place, I have a cabinet for, too.  
The places are all marked: Logan Square, for one,  
as the sunset appeared from bay windows; Liberty Place Towers  
to the right, due south; the Franklin Institute due  
north, courtyard full of curiosities. It is understood  
that these are what make up your brain: colors,  
forms, tableaus— a succession that was me for you, too.

Sultry nights in West Philadelphia were another  
vocabulary for us— grass plots dotted the concrete  
yard beneath your window, wood-paneled floor, wooden  
dresser taking our tripped-out trysts, making them  
rustic. A poet's brain transcendentalizes language &  
philosophy— I always trusted as secure, what  
started with you & sense. Grounded in sense,  
right there on Baltimore Avenue, was an implicit  
engagement with taking what was banal in  
the script of our consciousness, shaking it loose.  
It's all in my own cabinet now, about shock, spark.  
No one ever gave me a better life— pathways  
from sense to oversoul-level awareness, fastening  
color to what could remain uncolored. Passions.

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. His latest book, *Volo: A Chapbook*, the fourth installment

of the Posit series, was released by Funtime Press in 2023.

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# OTOLITHS

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[Adam Fieled](#)

## from *Equations*

#37

Bars work into sex equations; so does travel. When Wendy and I hook up in New England, we manifest not only guts and bravado, but glamor. We are transients there, doing what transients do. What I make with Kyra, who shares a large flat in the East Village with one of her also-fashionista friends, is even more gruesomely constructed. Kyra is John's sister. John and I are running the Philly Free School together. When we stop off to spend the day with Kyra in Manhattan, and then the night, I know instantly that (as is gruesome to admit I could be this crass) I can make a score here. Kyra is drastically, dramatically about charm, glamor, and intrigue. The raven-haired, buxom look she favors is pure Liz Taylor, skin slightly bronzed more than Liz, and, most importantly, a physiology which does not say (as most physiologies do) no instantly. All her postures, jests, glances suggest there is room in her. Yet with John to think of (this is his sister), the transient sucker punch into bed would depend on me being (as Wendy had been to her benefactors in New Hampshire) more brutish than usual. Decentered away from our personal norm, against a novel backdrop, in the middle of a period of expansion and growth, why shouldn't I be brutish? Now's the time. At a bar not far from her flat, John and I hold court. Here is Samantha, a friend of mine from the old Manhattan days. We flirt outrageously, too. I've got a girl on either side of me on an elegant sofa (Manhattan, more than Philly, favors sofas in bars). John is bemused. Punch-drunk on all the attention, I understand that Samantha lives too far away, in the recesses of Brooklyn. Tonight it must be Kyra, or no one. John is also high as a kite and more tolerant than most. When the three of us tumble drunkenly back into Kyra's apartment, the crunch comes. I'm either going to make a play to sequester myself in Kyra's room with Kyra or be more civil with John, and less pushy generally. Fortunately or unfortunately (and channeling, perhaps, Baudelaire's Good Devil), I feel the game within me, and have just the right concoction running through my veins to see it through to the end. A bar is a game; travel is a game, often, too; and when game-stakes are raised, you either rise to the occasion or you don't. The door is eventually shut on John, who can't not laugh (welcome to P.F.S., right?), and I am alone with Kyra. The night is hot, her room not air conditioned. We don't talk much. I find myself riding the game, pushing the river, and what happens is not masterful or revelatory, but adequate. The fashionista appurtenance items (mostly clothes to be debuted, turned in to authorities, or discarded), sounds of the East Village beneath us, even Marlboro Reds to smoke (not my usual brand), all coalesce into a sense that having started on one square on a game board (that's bar-talk), I've done a game version of a check-mate. I've been a Zen arrow into space the right way. Even as I am not unaware that deeper questions and resonances are being unanswered, and John has real reason to be annoyed. For the night, I am Kyra's appurtenance item and she mine. This inverts who I am with Trish and Jena, but once the action's over and Kyra's asleep, there's no way out. The equation is: you did it, and that's it.

**Adam Fieled** is a poet based in Philadelphia. Funtime Press released *Saturn: the first eight print books by Adam Fieled* in 2023.

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